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ABSTRACT

Minnesota has been the first state to embrace many education reforms, but it is also characterized by low state standards and problematic desegregation and diversity proposals. This report examines why Minnesota is good on some education policies and bad on others. It also draws the lessons with the greatest importance for other states. The political, social, and cultural topographies of Minnesota are reviewed. The heart of the analysis examines educational freedom and choice, academic standards and accountability, and diversity and race. The analysis indicates that no institution or individual is more important in the making and breaking of state education policies than governors, particularly, governors who are engaged. Also of importance is the amount of time an idea or initiative is allowed to linger in educational "catacombs." Minnesota has benefited from a rich array of civic organizations and public intellectuals who are skillful in advancing policies they like and retarding those they do not. The report also shows the reluctance of Minnesotans to deal with the issue of race and the way in which Minnesota teacher unions have opposed the victories spotlighted in this report. The probable position of the state's new governor, Jesse Ventura, is discussed. (Contains 57 end notes.) (SLD)

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Strange Brew: Minnesota's Motley Mix of School Reforms

by Mitchell B. Pearlstein

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Corrections to *Strange Brew: Minnesota's Motley Mix of School Reforms*
(1/12/99)

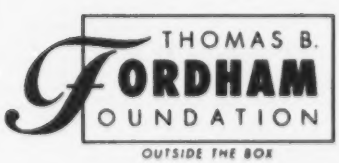
Several footnote markers were lost in the printing process. The missing footnotes belong in the following places:

Footnote 3	On page 2, in last line of last paragraph of first column. It wasn't as if members of the State Board of Education and staffers in the Department of Children, Families and Learning[3] got to pursue their designs behind the walls of a scholastic CIA.
Footnote 7	On page 6, in last line of first full paragraph of second column. This seems to be Minnesota's rule of thumb.[7]
Footnote 16	On page 8, in third line of first paragraph of first column. There's no time for a step-by-step review of just how the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program[16] reached Perpich's desk for signature in 1985;
Footnote 31	On page 12, in eighth line of second column. The book also talks about how Carlson came to realize, because of student testing, that Minnesota kids were not doing as well as he had thought.[31]
Footnote 32	On page 12, in last line of next-to-last paragraph of first column. "Unlike many other states, however, Minnesota rejected 'A Nation at Risk' prescriptions and embarked on a very homegrown approach to K-12 reform."[32]
Footnote 45	On page 16, in last line of first full paragraph of second column. The article quoted Matthew Little, retired president of the Minneapolis NAACP, who warned that if the Legislature didn't approve the plan and adequately fund it, "that is going to set the grounds" for a lawsuit.[45]
Footnote 46	On page 16, in last line of first full paragraph of second column. … the "courts will certainly intervene, and Minnesotans will rue the day legislators didn't pony up to close the education gap that so affects the future of the state."[46]
Footnote 51	On page 18, in last line of second full paragraph of first column. It proceeded unilaterally to drop the more intrusive and unrealistic aspects of its plan rather than wait for the 1996 Legislature to apply what likely would have been mortal blows.[51]
Footnote 53	On page 19, in first line of paragraph continued from p. 18, first column. "'Hundreds more,' Norman Draper of the *Star Tribune* reported, called, e-mailed or wrote CFL with their opposition."[53]

Strange Brew

Minnesota's Motley Mix of School Reforms

by
Mitchell B. Pearlstein



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Foreword

Minnesota was the first state to embrace many important education reforms, from statewide open enrollment to charter schools to tax credits for parents paying certain education expenses. Given that Minnesota also is the only state never to have voted for Ronald Reagan, one might well be surprised to find that Minnesota has so often been at the forefront of expanding educational freedom. But the story doesn't end there, nor is it all happy. In addition to the reforms just mentioned, Minnesota has also been home to lamentable state academic standards and problematic desegregation and diversity proposals. What could explain such a strange mix of policies?

We asked Dr. Mitchell Pearlstein, President of the Minneapolis-based Center of the American Experiment, to try to make sense of his state's unusual experiences in education. What lay behind Minnesota's worthy innovations? Who was responsible for the bad ideas? Mitch's short answer: governors were behind most of the proposals that expanded education choice, while the flawed policies emerged from the state's education bureaucracy.

The stories behind the different policies are of course more complicated (and interesting) than that. Mitch begins this report by providing some background on the state and its peculiar political culture, which is itself a challenge, given that the state is presently represented by two United States senators from opposite ends of the political spectrum (Rod Grams and Paul Wellstone) and a governor, Jesse Ventura, who was once a professional wrestler. Next come three fascinating accounts of how the policy debates unfolded in Minnesota concerning educational freedom and choice, academic standards and accountability, and diversity and race. The final section offers broader observations about the making of education policy in Minnesota and some thoughts on what the future might bring.

While Minnesota is distinctive in its education policy, we think that Mitch's observations will be interesting to anyone involved in state politics and policy. He is certainly well positioned to tell these tales. Mitch was founding president of Center of the American Experiment. His Minnesota roots are deep: he earned his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, taught at Hamline University in St. Paul, served as assistant to the governor of Minnesota and the president of the University of Minnesota, and wrote for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. He also served for two-and-a-half years in the U.S. Department of Education under Presidents Reagan and Bush. It is hard to imagine anyone but Mitch writing this report. Readers wishing to contact him directly may write to him at Center of the American Experiment, 1024 Plymouth Building, 12 S. 6th St., Minneapolis, MN 55402 or send e-mail to mitch@amexp.org.

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Chester E. Finn, Jr., President
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
Washington, D.C.
January 2000

Introduction[1]

Exactly how distinctive is Minnesota in its political and civic affairs?

Given that its two United States senators, Rod Grams and Paul Wellstone, are separated by no fewer than 179 degrees ideologically, and that its governor, Jesse Ventura, still hasn't separated himself from the wrestling ring, the correct answer, I'm proud to report, is that Minnesota has come to be more politically imaginative than any state in the union. Say and boast what you will about larger states like California, Texas, and New York, and even politically quirky places like Louisiana, they cannot hold a candle to the beacon currently blazing across the land from my adopted state of twenty-five years.

This luminescence is not limited to electoral politics. For at least fifteen years, it also has applied, even more complexly, to policymaking in elementary and secondary education. Just how complex? Consider:

- In 1985, Minnesota was the first state to adopt "postsecondary options," a program allowing high-school juniors and seniors to take college courses at government expense. This program—which is based on the wishes of parents as opposed to the consent of local school officials—continues to apply to both public and private postsecondary institutions.
- In 1987, Minnesota was the first state to adopt statewide open enrollment, allowing students to attend public schools across district lines.
- In 1991, Minnesota was the first state to pass a charter school law.
- Half-a-dozen years later, in 1997, Minnesota led the way again, this time in passing legislation allowing parents to receive tax credits for certain education expenses.[2]

Over the last decade, no state has taken the lead more often in expanding educational freedom. Yet the news has not always been good for education reformers. In the mid-1990s, state officials sought (unsuccessfully) to finalize and install what was surely the nation's worst statewide desegregation plan. In 1997-98, many of those same officials sought (again unsuccessfully) to impose what was surely the nation's worst statewide "diversity rule." And currently, Minnesota parents, educators, politicians and others remain locked in a fight over what are arguably the worst academic standards in the nation, the state's so-called "Profile of Learning."

> How can one state be so good on some education policies and pursuits and so bad on others?

How can one state be so good on some education policies and pursuits and so bad on others? What lessons have greatest salience beyond Minnesota's borders?

The rest of this monograph is organized this way: The next section previews the paper's major findings and themes. We then take a brief look at the political, social, and cultural topography that has shaped Minnesota's penchant, not just for the beautiful and good in education, but also for the terrible and ugly. The three sections that follow constitute the heart of the analysis, as they examine questions of educational freedom and choice; academic standards and accountability; and then diversity and race. We conclude with a review of these convoluted patterns as well as speculation about prospects for expanded school choice in the uniquely Minnesota age of Jesse.

Three Themes

Three themes emerge from this study that are most pertinent for a national audience.

- Governors, far more than any other players, have the standing and clout to dominate the dance of policymaking in education—but only if they consciously choose to lead. If they opt to immerse themselves, not necessarily in legislative minutiae, but in the figurative death struggle that almost always precedes passage of anything worthwhile in education. Any lesser commitment of time and attention by the governor and his staff virtually guarantees that advantage will reside with those, both in and out of government, who do what they do full-time and for whom "cant" and "can't" are synonyms. I'm talking about professionals and others involved in schooling who seem hard-wired in their opposition to every idea or breakthrough saluted in this paper, from expanded choice to real standards to nonpatronizing notions about race.

Governors, far more than any other players, have the standing and clout to dominate the dance of policymaking in education

- Just as governors matter, time matters. Or more precisely, the amount of time a proposal is allowed to fester—free of sunshine and public scrutiny—is very important.

  The diversity rule—like the desegregation rule before it and the Profile of Learning after it—limped along for years, not just growing more labyrinthine by the moment, but too crouched to appear on popular radar more than sporadically. Then all hell broke loose. It wasn't as if members of the State Board of Education and staffers in the Department of Children, Families and Learning got to pursue their designs behind the walls of a scholastic CIA. But it's hard not to be struck by how many stabs at bad policymaking in education have been pursued under cover of near darkness.

- Ideas matter, of course. But so does a state's intellectual and organizational infrastructure; the institutional machinery by which good ideas get propelled and bad ones rejected. In this sphere, Minnesota has been favored.

  Without the work of people like Joe Nathan and Ted Kolderie under the aegis of the Citizens League and other organizations in the 1970s and early '80s, Gov. Rudy Perpich and his associates would have found an empty cupboard when they went looking for new ideas in 1984. Without an organization like Minnesotans for School Choice—which owes its own existence to several predecessor groups that toiled long years in dry vineyards—Gov. Arne Carlson would have been hard-pressed to rally nearly enough rank-and-file enthusiasm for his choice proposal in 1997. And without the likes of Katherine Kersten, reinforced by organizations like Center of the American Experiment and the Minnesota Family Council, chances are real that no one would have effectively challenged the State Board of Education's misguided desegregation rule in 1994 or its misguided diversity rule in 1997. Much the same compliment can be paid to several business groups, the Minnesota Business Partnership most of all, in promoting school choice and educational freedom.

The Political Landscape

I haven't used the word "liberal" yet. But when talking about Minnesota as an outlier, that's generally the first label used. Nor is it entirely unfair. Minnesota, for example, was the only state never to vote for Ronald Reagan (though that might not have been the case if someone other than native son Walter Mondale had run against him in 1984).

Yet without suggesting that Minnesota is poised to morph into Idaho anytime soon, the fact is that Minnesotans are a more eclectic bunch politically than is often assumed. As noted, this often manifests itself at the ballot box, as witness not just conservative Rod Grams's victory in 1994, but also the GOP takeover of the state House of Representatives in 1998, as well as the dismal third-place showing of Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey III in that year's gubernatorial race—a defeat of no small symbolic weight.[4]

In 1993-94, Center of the American Experiment sought to quantify the fact that Minnesotans were not lockstep left by commissioning a survey of public opinion on a range of issues in the state. Our assumption about citizens holding more than an isolated "nonliberal" idea or disposition proved correct, as just these few data (about school choice, not incidentally) suggest.[5]

- Sixty-one percent of respondents (66 percent of those with children in school) supported a voucher program that would enable them to send their children to the public, private, or parochial school of their choice.
- A full 70 percent (73 percent of those with children in school) supported a fundamentally identical choice plan—i.e., including public, private, and religious schools—when the word "voucher" was not contained in the question and no specific mention was made of governmental allotment of money per pupil.

With such events and data as prologue, I want to make four additional points about the environment in which education policy in Minnesota is sculpted—sometimes artfully, other times clumsily.

Faith in Governmental Activism and Experimentation

In the summer of 1997, shortly after Governor Carlson signed into law his statewide tax credit for education expenses, I asked an old University of Minnesota friend about the seeming paradox of a state like Minnesota repeatedly setting the pace on school choice. Because for all the exceptions and nuances cited immediately above, it's nevertheless a stretch to view Minnesota as steering the pace car of any right-of-center vanguard, and it's a fact that the current drive for school choice across the country comes substantially from more conservative precincts. Yet the origins of the choice movement in Minnesota owe substantially more to liberals and moderates.

The origins of the choice movement in Minnesota owe a great deal to liberals and moderates.

My friend's explanation was particularly interesting. He tied the state's leadership in school choice to its faith in governmental activism and experimentation. Come again? Certainly, to the extent that the 1997 debate over "private-school choice" suggested diminishing confidence in the ability of government schools to adequately serve all children, it sounds strange to attribute Governor Carlson's victory to confidence in governmental action in the first place. But there is, indeed, a link between such implicit faith in

government and a belief that the "system" can be manipulated and massaged in order to serve real, live kids.

Think of it as a kind of political jujitsu: Critics of big government use their opponents' excessive confidence in it to wrest away a slice of its power.

Race

At a meeting in St. Paul several years ago, local school-choice advocates were informed by an otherwise brilliant consultant that Minnesota would not adopt any significant choice legislation unless and until the minority communities of the Twin Cities organized behind such a plan, as had happened recently in Milwaukee. Nevertheless, not long afterward, with minority groups in the Twin Cities still not mobilized in any serious way, Governor Carlson signed K-12 tax credits into law.

The next section will address how this political feat was possible. For now, the point is that what might be described as "racial politics" in Minnesota reflects the fact that the proportion of people of color in the Twin Cities has historically been low for a major U.S. metropolitan area. True, this has been changing lately, with the transformation clearest in public schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul, where a majority of students have been black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian (especially Hmong in St. Paul) for a number of years. But it's entirely possible to attend a half-dozen school-choice meetings without ever seeing a nonwhite face.

All the more intriguing, then, that so much of the inspiration for school choice on the part of Governor Carlson and others was rooted in what it can accomplish for low-income, inner-city children. Carlson, for instance, knew from polls in early 1997 that it made more public-opinion sense to focus on how his plan would "empower" all Minnesota families, not just economically strapped ones—which is to say, disproportionately minority ones. Yet whenever he was on the stump, he wound up largely ignoring the poll's admonitions and spoke, instead, with passion about what moved him most: kids falling through cracks, as he nearly had done as a child.

Regarding questions of desegregation and diversity, I would contend that Minnesota leaders have demonstrated a greater proclivity for running headlong into politically correct traps than most, as well as a more pronounced reluctance to challenge racially sensitive ideas and proposals, no matter how absurd or counterproductive. If the question in the Land of 10,000 Lakes has anything to do with race, it's as if a big cat is always ready to clamp down on elite tongues. As we will see, for example, in both the 1994-95 desegregation plan and the 1997-98 diversity plan, it took someone from outside government and the education establishment, my colleague Kathy Kersten, to give voice to radically contrary, yet widespread, points of view.

A Not-So-Invincible Cartel

In a television debate a couple of years ago, one of the participants said that the two teacher unions operating in the state at the time, the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, were too powerful to allow the adoption of a universal choice plan. (The MEA and the MFT subsequently merged, making Minnesota the first state in which affiliates of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have done so.) In response to this assertion, I said no way, blurting out that, rather than being formidable, the unions were basically "impotent." It was the kind of impulsive comment I wanted back immediately, but it was too late. I would have to live with it.

As it turns out, I've been able to live with it quite well. Not that Education Minnesota (the name of the combined union) really is impotent, but as it showed in its vigorous and expensive support of the third-place finisher in the 1998 gubernatorial race, the political

sway of organized teachers in Minnesota can be surprisingly small.

How small? Both the MEA and the MFT opposed every single reform celebrated in this study when first taken up: postsecondary options, open enrollment, charter schools, as well as tax credits and expanded deductions for education expenses. In every one of these confrontations, however, it was the teacher unions, not the crusading governors, that eventually lost. It was this track record that I was thinking of when I made that rash statement on television.

Many legislators and candidates do live in fear that the presumed power (and real money) of Education Minnesota will be used against them if they don't vote, or promise to vote, in prescribed ways. It would be a mistake to underestimate the effects of this trepidation. At the same time, it would be wrong to discount the eagerness on the part of many lawmakers to demonstrate their independence of the union. This perhaps applies especially to Democrats, who are most likely to receive campaign help from Education Minnesota and, therefore, are most likely to be seen as beholden.

Such a moment presented itself in June 1997 when Governor Carlson and legislative leaders finally reached agreement on a biennial funding package for education that included an altered version of his tax-credit plan. This pact was the culmination of excruciating negotiations that had stretched beyond the regular legislative session into a special session a month later. While Carlson was pleased to have won what he did, his DFL opponents took comfort that they had resisted his demand that the new tax credits apply to tuition at private and parochial schools (sundry other education expenses qualify). The Democrats, in other words, saw themselves as having done yeoman work in defending the MEA and MFT's opposition to "vouchers" or anything approaching them.

Union officials, however, were neither grateful nor amused, as they openly lobbied against the compromise—despite the fact that it contained very large public school funding increases that they had pushed for. This exasperated many exhausted legislators, who proceeded to vote for the deal overwhelmingly and, it's fair to say, with more than a little liberating satisfaction.

Two Chips Off Similar Blocks

Whatever differences in politics, ideology, or temperament may have separated Rudy Perpich and Arne Carlson (and there were plenty), hindsight suggests that when the topic was education—particularly the education of poor children—the two governors drew intellectually and emotionally from the fact that each had grown up poor, the child of immigrants. Rudy, in Hibbing, in northern Minnesota, was the son of native-born Croatian parents, while Arne, in New York City, was the son of native-born Swedish parents.

Neither seemed ever to forget that education is a lifeline, especially for those with the roughest starts in life. Carlson, for example, still finds it tantamount to impossible to talk about school choice without referring to how he would have wound up on the "ash heap" if it were not for the scholarship he was afforded as a teenager to attend a more challenging private school. As for Perpich, he was deeply bothered by the fact that poor families enjoyed far fewer educational choices than did more affluent families. As a result, he has been credited with nothing less than redefining the very idea of school choice to include the public sector.[6]

The best answer to the question of why Minnesota led the nation in educational innovation for the last fifteen years is that Rudy Perpich (who died in 1995) and then Arne Carlson were willing to go to the proverbial mat to get what they wanted—or something close to it—never mind Minnesota's presumed enthrallment to liberal orthodoxy, union clout, or anything else.

Open Enrollment and Other Early Steps

Perhaps the most striking observation that can be made about the drive for expanded educational freedom and choice in Minnesota over the last two decades—beyond again citing the central role of gubernatorial leadership—has been the range of players and coalitions involved. In simplest terms, and with the exception of one or two business groups, the people and organizations that led the way in the 1980s for variations of public school choice are not those now leading the charge for variations of choice involving religious and other private schools. The first cluster was composed mainly of political liberals and moderates, whereas the second cluster, with notable exceptions, is more conservative in flavor.

The people and organizations that led the way in the 1980s for variations of public school choice are not those now leading the charge for variations of choice involving religious and other private schools

This is not to say that all members of the former group of activists have retired to policy pasture. As witness the ongoing work of Ted Kolderie and Joe Nathan, for example, on behalf of strengthening the charter school movement and better aligning incentives in public education, this is not true at all. Neither is it correct to say that there is any crippling animosity between the two generations of reformers. Simply that representatives of the two groups have tended to go their respective ways.

The other introductory point to be made is that, while Minnesota has consistently moved first to expand education options, almost as consistently it has been overtaken by other states and, in some instances, cities. While the adoption of interdistrict choice in 1987, for example, was a genuine breakthrough, it soon came to pale in comparison with low-income voucher programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland as a means of affording measurably improved education options for the children of families who need them most. While Minnesota was also the first state to make charter schools possible, others followed quickly with stronger laws and many more charter schools.

So fast, but no faster. So far, but no further. This seems to be Minnesota's rule of thumb.

Intellectual and Serendipitous Origins

Public education in Minnesota was rolling along rather complacently both before and immediately after the 1983 publication of "A Nation at Risk," the Reagan administration's educational call to arms. Whereas other states promptly started adding core courses, increasing the amount of time students spent in school, etc., most Minnesota educators and politicians took a pass, confident that their schools did not suffer the severity of ills—if any ills at all—that infected schools elsewhere.[8]

Nevertheless, Kolderie, along with colleagues at the Minneapolis-based Citizens League[9] and later at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, had been studying ways of increasing both competition and equity in government services. This work, aimed at moving away from the "bureaucratic model" and toward more consumer choice, had started in the 1970s and originally focused on areas such as transit, refuse, and health care.[10]

During the late '70s and early '80s, one of the most prestigious, though still new, business organizations in the state, the Minnesota

Business Partnership,[11] had made a good portion of its mark by focusing on education. In particular, the chairman of its Educational Quality Task Force, Lew Lehr (whose day job was CEO of 3M), was none too sanguine about educational quality in Minnesota. This led to the Partnership releasing a study in late 1984 that recommended reforms including "restructuring grades 7-12 to provide *both* greater focus and student choice [emphasis in the original]."[12]

It was exactly at this time that Perpich, mid-way in his first full term as governor,[13] was on the lookout for new ideas in education for the coming legislative session but was disappointed by the thin fare he was getting from his Department of Education. This led to a meeting—in the office of the Commissioner of Finance Gus Donhowe, not that of Commissioner of Education Ruth Randall—involving senior administration officials and several of the people in the Citizens League/MBP crowd, including the aforementioned Joe Nathan. Nathan, a St. Paul educator, had been thinking about ways of increasing competition and equity in public elementary and secondary schools for a longer stretch than about anyone else in the state. In fact, he had argued for public school choice in a 1983 book that was important for no other reason than that it made the case from the left for greater parental freedom and discretion.[14]

Among the assortment of ideas proposed by the non-administration guests, one would allow students to cross district lines—long the Berlin Walls of public education—to attend the public school of their choice. A couple of days later, Perpich agreed to run with it, and just days after that, he announced his intentions at a speech quickly arranged by the Citizens League.

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The "Campaign"

As one might expect, reaction in the education community was not warm. The first story in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* opened with this synopsis: "Some school officials were puzzled by Gov. Rudy Perpich's education proposal Friday while teachers' union officials vowed to oppose it and key legislators greeted it cautiously."[15]

A deputy superintendent in Minneapolis said he wanted more information, but nevertheless said the plan raised "stability issues." "How do we know who our students are, how do we design programs and staffing? And what about our obligation to desegregate?"

The incoming Republican chairwoman of the House Finance Committee said she spent two hours "grilling" administration officials on the plan and came away convinced that it was unworkable. "I see this as the state being in the position of encouraging elitism," she said.

Whipping out his biggest rhetorical gun, the executive secretary of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers shot off that "a voucher system would be the end of public education." Public schools, he said, "would simply become caretaking facilities for those who can't afford anything better." (The governor, please recall, had not proposed vouchers, merely the opening of enrollment among *public* schools.)

The president of the then-rival Minnesota Education Association, in addition to blasting Perpich's open-enrollment plan, was similarly unimpressed with his proposal for statewide testing. "Multiple-choice tests," she said, "often don't address or measure critical thinking skills, and that may be the most important learning that goes on in a school." As we will see, Perpich's encouragement of testing (tepid as some have argued that it was) was to have

loud echoes a decade later.

There's no time for a step-by-step review of just how the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program reached Perpich's desk for signature in 1985; how the High School Graduation Incentive Program landed there in 1987;[17] how a voluntary cross-district, open-enrollment component passed that same year; and how Perpich came to sign a more rigorous, state-mandated open-enrollment bill into law in 1988. Suffice to say that a critical number of people, both in and out of government, plugged along tenaciously for several years.[18]

For example, a high-powered "Governor's Discussion Group" met regularly during this period and, by the end of 1986, had reached agreement on open enrollment—as long as it was voluntary, not just on the part of families, but also on the part of school districts.[19] The group was eclectic, with both friends and foes of choice, including representatives of the two teacher unions and other provider organizations.

In addition, Chuck Slocum, the then-executive director the Minnesota Business Partnership, reports that his group sought to have all its members—CEO's of the approximately 100 biggest businesses in the state—personally lobby at least two legislators annually on these and other subjects.

Three points warrant making.

First, it didn't take long for open-enrollment proponents to control the moral high ground on the equity issue. Opponents, including union officials, found it increasingly difficult to argue against the proposition that choice already did exist—but only for families who could buy their way to better schools for their children.

The second point refers back to the quotation marks surrounding the word *campaign* in the subhead above.

According to Tom Triplett, who served in several senior jobs for the governor, Perpich was "cagey" in never letting on to opponents in the Legislature either how much he really wanted the initiatives or how certain he was of the way in which they would shake up the system if they passed. "The last thing I want you to do," Triplett recalls Perpich telling him, "is to raise the visibility of this."

The third point has to do with a fundamental question: Why did Perpich—a Democrat and former school board member in his hometown of Hibbing—emerge as the nation's first governor to push for public school choice? In speaking to his former associates, I was told that the work of Kolderie, Nathan and others "didn't persuade him, but gave him a way of couching his basic beliefs." What were those beliefs? Or, more precisely, what compelled him to push for what he did? The best explanation I have found is startlingly simple: Compared to public schools in Hibbing, Perpich was very disappointed by what he saw as the inferior quality of public schools in St. Paul after moving there, early in his political career, with his wife and two children. Unable to afford private education for his son and daughter, he relocated his family to a suburb where he found public schools more to his liking. Years later, the personal became the political; a familial frustration turned into a policy change.[20]

Years later, the personal became the political; a familial frustration turned into a policy change.

Charter Schools

The 1991 charter school law was more the product of legislative than gubernatorial leadership. But as with the Perpich reforms, the early impetus for charters in Minnesota owed much to a conducive intellectual infrastructure in the state—and not a little to right timing.

In October 1988, the Minneapolis Foundation pulled together a group of civic leaders for a retreat on improving public schools. Among the attendees was Ember Reichgott (now Junge), a Democratic state senator from suburban New Hope. Also there

were the late Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, and Sy Fliegel, majordomo of public school choice in New York City's East Harlem.

Shanker's remarks were shaped by his recent reading of *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts* by an educator named Ray Budde, and by a speech the union chief himself had given at the National Press Club earlier that year on affording teachers greater freedom to create new programs and schools.[21] Shanker was enthusiastic about (what he described as) charters, writing several columns about them. He also got the AFT to endorse the idea of charters at the union's 1988 convention.

Inspired by what Shanker and Fliegel had to say, several conference participants, including the ubiquitous Nathan and an official of the Twin Cities-based Urban Coalition, offered to help Reichgott draft charter legislation. The Citizens League also got involved, appointing a diverse committee to study the issue. Eventually, all members of the panel signed a report recommending the "creation of charter public schools sponsored either by a local school board or the State Board of Education." However, neither the Minnesota Federation of Teachers nor the Minnesota Education Association concurred, and they succeeded in blocking passage of charter legislation in 1989 and again in 1990.[22]

At least on the surface, the situation didn't seem much more promising in 1991, as the newly elected Arne Carlson (who had won in 1990 with MEA backing) opposed charters, as did his first commissioner of education, Gene Mammenga, who had been the MEA's top lobbyist.

Nevertheless, Senator Reichgott and her allies managed to prevail in 1991, as the unions overplayed their hand by pressing too hard on Ken Nelson, the DFL chairman of the House Education Finance Committee, to vote against the bill in conference. He rebelled, and the initiative soon became law as part of a larger piece of legislation.

Still, it was a weak law, as Nelson, despite his differences with the unions, held fast to burdensome restrictions such as limiting the number of charter schools allowed (eight) and requiring that a majority of members of their boards be teachers (as opposed to parents). Most troubling to Reichgott was a provision that required charters to be approved by a local school board *and* the State Board of Education rather than one *or* the other.

Minnesota's 1991 charter bill, constipated as it was, opened the door for other states to do better.

Though not comfortably, Reichgott accepted these compromises. "I was delighted and disappointed," she has said. "Delighted that the charter concept had been accepted. Disappointed that the final provisions were so weak."[23]

Was she correct in taking the deal instead of holding out for more? The answer, based on subsequent developments, in both Minnesota and the rest of the country, is yes. Minnesota's 1991 charter bill, constipated as it was, opened the door for other states to do better. Moreover, Reichgott and other legislators—aided and abetted by what would come to be Carlson's new and improved views on the subject—succeeded in loosening Minnesota's own charter law, most recently during the 1999 session. As captured in the title of the book written by fans of Carlson at the end of his eight-year tenure in 1998, it clearly proved to be a good idea to "Take Your Victories as They Come," as this early traction for charters proved essential both within the state and beyond.[24]

Tax Credits and Expanded Deductions

More Oomph

Predating all the work of Kolderie, Nathan, the Minnesota Business Partnership, *et al.*, in laying the groundwork for Rudy Perpich's

breakthroughs, a different group of men and women had been pushing for increased state assistance for parents sending their children to private schools. This was Minnesota's iteration of Citizens for Educational Freedom (CEF), an organization composed largely, though not exclusively, of Catholic, Lutheran, and Christian schools. I was asked to join its board, and did so, on my return to Minnesota in 1990 after serving two-and-a-half years at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington.

If CEF had a long-term vision, I took it to be that Minnesota might someday adopt a system of vouchers that would enable parents to send their children to whatever schools best met their academic and social needs, be they public or private, secular or sectarian. As dreams go, though, this was very much a distant one, one that no Minnesota governor had ever come close to pursuing.[25]

For all of CEF's virtues (including leading the way in the 1971 passage of a short-lived tax credit for private school parents), by the early 1990s it was no longer very vigorous, and it gave way to a new group in 1994 called the Choice-in-Education-League of Minnesota. It was CELM that was on the scene as the state's leading school-choice organization when Governor Carlson introduced legislation in 1996 to give modest vouchers to low-income students in four districts so that they might attend a private or parochial school if that was their parents' wish.[26]

But just as CEF had demonstrated insufficient oomph, CELM did the same during the legislative session, providing not nearly the grass-roots firepower that the governor's office needed. Carlson's plan commanded just a scattering of legislative votes.

It was at this point, in April or May of 1996, that senior members of Carlson's staff informed CELM leaders (I was vice-chairman at the time) that the governor wanted to return to this fray in 1997—but only if he could be assured of strong help in the trenches. My colleagues and I welcomed this news, but also replied that if the governor was looking for an organization to mobilize statewide support, CELM was not that group, as we were too narrow in make-up. Our board had plenty of educators and clergy, but not enough politicians, business leaders and others with real clout.

This led to replacement of CELM by yet another new organization, Minnesotans for School Choice. Two decisions turned out to be particularly critical. The first was to conceive the work of the new group as resembling that of a political campaign, with all the sustained energy and sense of purpose that implied. The second was to hire an exceptionally talented young woman, Kristin Robbins, as executive director.[27] Trained in economics, Robbins had served in Washington under a Republican congressman, but she also had worked effectively with Democrats. Her ability to engender trust across a variety of lines was to prove vital during the school-choice campaign of 1997, when she succeeded in keeping an eclectic group of activists inspirited and cooperating.

A New Vehicle and Strategy

While a solid organization with a high-powered bipartisan board was now being sculpted, the fact remained that Carlson's first serious stab at choice—his low-income voucher idea in 1996—had gone nowhere, and not just because Democrats and liberals didn't like it. Religious conservatives didn't think much of it, either, as many feared that it would eventually lead to government intrusion in the affairs of their schools and churches. What, then, should the governor run with in 1997?

He opted to forget about vouchers and focus on expanding an existing law—on Minnesota's books since the 1950s—that gave parents tax deductions for educational expenses, be they accrued in public, private or parochial schools, or even by home-school families. Not only did religious conservatives view credits and deductions as far less threatening than vouchers, but the U.S. Supreme Court had been good enough to bless the state statute in 1983, finding it constitutional in *Mueller v. Allen.*

An extremely large problem remained, however. Democrats controlled both the Minnesota House and Senate and they were vehemently opposed to expanding choice, regardless of method, to include nongovernmental schools.

Carlson's strategy, in response, was to rely on the fact that there were enough Republicans in the House to sustain any veto he might issue.[28] Which is to say, the plan was for him to either threaten to veto, or actually veto, any omnibus bill for K-12 education that did not include tax credits and expanded deductions. Push would eventually come to shove, went the thinking, and one or more special legislative sessions over the summer might be needed. But the fear of a new school year starting in September without state spending in place for the biennium would cause Democrats to bend. And that, more or less, was the way things worked out, although Democrats refused to budge in their opposition to the single most important aspect of Carlson's plan: having the tax credits cover tuition in private and parochial schools.[29]

How was it that Republicans in the House—many of whom were not very enamored with the plan—hung tough throughout? And what kind of popular support was generated for choice?

Great credit needs to be given to two GOP members of the House: Minority Leader Steve Sviggum and Rep. Leroy Koppendrayer. Reinforcing their tenacity and that of their colleagues were two astute coalitions. One was composed of business organizations, including the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Minnesota, Minneapolis and St. Paul chambers of commerce, and the Minnesota Realtors Association. The other was the aforementioned group for which Kristin Robbins and Minnesotans for School Choice served as hub. Its members included the Minnesota Catholic Conference, Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators, Minnesota Association of Christian Schools, an association of Lutheran Schools, the Minnesota Family Council, and Center of the American Experiment.

The dual coalitions not only bucked up legislators, but also had something to do with building remarkable popular support for what Carlson wanted to do, at least as measured by four statewide polls taken between February and June 1997. One survey was conducted by the Minneapolis-based *Star Tribune;* another was a joint effort of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* Minnesota Public Radio, and the Twin Cities' NBC affiliate; a third was commissioned by Minnesotans for School Choice; and a fourth was commissioned by the Choice-in-Education League Foundation (now known as the Partnership for Choice in Education). Save for one biased question in the *Star Tribune* poll, the percentage of respondents expressing support either for Carlson's plan or for an equivalent ranged from a solid 58 percent to an even more impressive 72 percent.[30]

The governor and his people also did an excellent job of setting the stage by exploiting (in the best sense of the term) dreadful results by eighth graders on basic skills tests in reading and math.

The governor and his people also did an excellent job of setting the stage by exploiting (in the best sense of the term) dreadful results by eighth graders on basic skills tests in reading and math. In one administration of the statewide exams, one in three children failed at least one of the tests, with the proportion rising to nine out of ten for minority youngsters in Minneapolis and St. Paul. These results continued to galvanize public opinion in favor of empowering parents as they accentuated the fact that established policies were not cutting it.

Minnesotans for School Choice spent a fair amount of money on television and radio commercials, while the teacher unions seemed

to have barely any electronic presence at all. As with MEA's refusal to cut DFL legislators any slack after they reached an agreement with Carlson in June 1997, this was just one more miscalculation by organized labor.

Why did the unions misread the situation so radically? Perhaps because they assumed they no longer had anything to worry about once they defeated Carlson's voucher proposal so definitively in 1996, and in light of continuing Democratic control of the House and Senate. Perhaps they assumed their work was over and they could focus instead (as they did) on what they do best: significantly increasing the basic funding formula for public schools. They were wrong.

Why did Arne Carlson become a fan of school choice? In *Take Your Victories as They Come*, people close to him cite things such as his frustration with the MEA. "Whatever he did," one staffer says, "it wasn't enough" to satisfy the larger of the teacher unions. Carlson himself is quoted as saying of the MEA, "Their agenda is wages, benefits, and shorter hours—the exact opposite of what I thought it was." The book also talks about how Carlson came to realize, because of student testing, that Minnesota kids were not doing as well as he had thought. Pulling strands like these together is a comment by one of the administration's more acute alumni who said, in an interview for this paper, that Arne Carlson came to trust "education providers less and less" as he came to understand that the "system was designed to serve the *system*, not kids."

Academic Standards and Accountability

In a case study of outcome-based education published in 1992, Tim Mazzoni and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota, wrote: "Like most American states, Minnesota during the years from 1983 to 1988 sought to utilize policy to upgrade its school system. Unlike many other states, however, Minnesota rejected 'A Nation at Risk' prescriptions and embarked on a very homegrown approach to K-12 reform."

As we have seen, that "homegrown approach" served the state (and rapidly thereafter, the nation) very well when the issue was educational freedom. The converse was and continues to be true in the matter of academic standards. The dose of Lake Wobegon chauvinism that persuaded Perpich and others that Minnesota could go it alone on choice likewise contributed to a blinding insularity in the development of what came to be known as the "Profile of Learning," the supposedly "high skills" portion of the state's "graduation rule" that is now in effect.

The Profile, according to one major Minnesota player, "ignores twenty years of activities in other states regarding standards." This purposeful obliviousness to good practices elsewhere has led critics such as Matt Gandal, then of the American Federation of Teachers, to say things along these lines: "Our concern is that the real academic content is left out. . . . I don't see a lot about what students need to know; there's more discussion about what they should do."

In turn, Minnesota's idiosyncratic path led defenders of the Profile to respond like this: "Minnesota has annually found its standards to be criticized by the federation because we persist in defining learning by what students need to know rather than by the traditional structure and departmentalization of high schools."[33]

Bruno Manno has argued that "nowhere has there been a longer and more concerted effort

to establish an outcome-based approach to student learning than in Minnesota. The effort took root in the 1970s and continues to this day." By "this day," Manno meant 1994 when he wrote, though the exercise persists in 1999. Also still true is his description of the debate on the issue as "muddled," a controversy that has meandered from "outcome-based education" to "results-oriented graduation standards" to "learning for success" to the current "Profile of Learning," with other stops along the way.[34]

As is often the case with problematic policies, the Profile's origins were promising and honorable. The Minnesota Department of Education, for example, began developing "Some Essential Learner Outcomes" (SELOs) as early as 1972. A bit more than a decade later, in 1983, Education Commissioner Ruth Randall urged the Legislature to replace traditional "clock hour/seat time graduation standards" with "learner outcomes and state achievement tests."[35] And within five years of that, the State Board of Education declared, as a journalist explained, "that it wanted to establish a system that would require a mastery of basic skills and also raise the bar of student achievement."[36]

Minnesota rejected "A Nation at Risk" prescriptions and embarked on a very homegrown approach to K-12 reform.

Where have things come to rest with the Profile? By far the most thorough critique of the program—what it actually is and requires—was authored in early 1999 by my American Experiment colleague, Katherine Kersten.[37]

"The Radical Mutation of a Good Idea"

In copious detail, Kersten made the case that:

- Far from being cutting-edge "best practice," the Profile's "performance-based" theory of education has been a "dominant influence in American education for many decades." And that this *"experiential approach may well be the primary cause of the very academic failure that the Profile is meant to remedy"* (italics in original). She described the goal of this approach, not as the transmission of specific knowledge, but as the teaching of generalizable skills such as "critical thinking." But such a conception of learning, she argued, was flawed, as research "clearly demonstrates that it's impossible to develop meaningful intellectual skills in the absence of substantive knowledge."
- Regarding the Profile's graduation "standards," she asserted that they were standards in name only, as they offered teachers "little guidance concerning precisely what students must know, and at what level of specificity." For example, the Profile, in a "typically broad and vague" way, calls on students to "demonstrate understanding of how historical and current scientific concepts and knowledge guide scientific inquiries." (Try and test *that.*) Kersten showed that many of the standards are, in fact, vocational rather than academic in nature.
- In the matter of assessment more generally, she noted how the Profile requires students to complete "performance packages," which can be described as sets of hands-on tasks like counting traffic at street corners, observing city council meetings, or "violating folkways" in public. While some of these exercises might sound advanced, it's a pedagogy that inevitably results in the loss of academic content and teacher time. It also can cause an explosion in record keeping. ("Violating folkways," by the way, can mean things like coming to school in a suit or dress "if this is not your normal school attire," and then evaluating observers' reactions.)
- In terms of comparability, Kersten correctly pointed out that, because of the Profile's

inherent subjectivity, "parents, employers and colleges will have no way of comparing the value of a performance package grade of '4' from Minneapolis North High School, to a grade of '1' from the city's South High, which is perceived as more academically demanding." And she said this about the Profile's implementation: "Designers of the standards for the state have raised ivory-tower musings to a high art. Then—hiding behind the mantle of 'local control'—they are leaving the mind-numbing details of implementation to school districts."

Kersten showed that many of the standards are, in fact, vocational rather than academic in nature.

In a three-way debate in October '98, the Democratic candidate for governor, Attorney General Humphrey, expressed support for the Profile, and in so doing, highlighted the success of proponents in equating the initiative with the very idea of rigor. "I don't think we should back away from the standards," he said. The Republican candidate, Norm Coleman, countered that the "problem" with the Profile is that, "You have these prescriptive dictates from the state that tell teachers and parents 'Here's how we're going to meet those standards.' And that doesn't make sense." As for the Reform Party candidate, Jesse Ventura, he went so far to say that he would create a task force to "take a hard look" at the Profile. "I'm not saying I'm against it," Ventura allowed. "I have mixed emotions." [38]

As it turned out, the 1999 Legislature wound up doing virtually nothing about the Profile, with its ten "learning areas," its more than 100 "content standards," and its other confusions applying to all grades, K-12. Yet there was lots of commotion. Vigorous grass-roots opposition, in fact, prompted the Republican-led House—with more than a little DFL concurrence—to vote to scrap the whole thing only months after the start of full-scale implementation, never mind that more than a decade and hundreds of millions of dollars had been consumed on the project.[39]

As for the DFL-controlled Senate, its members weren't always enthralled with the Profile either.[40] But they weren't displeased enough to do what the House had done, and the two sides never could work out an accommodation in conference committee—meaning that the Profile remains standing today.

How did Minnesota wind up in such a spot; so distant from where officials like Linda Powell, Arne Carlson's second education commissioner, said the state must go? "Minnesota," Powell argued in 1993, "needs a system of high academic standards which are clearly stated and measurable."[41] To the extent that the Profile's standards are "high," they are more ethereal than rigorous. And in no way are they as clear and measurable as are history standards in Virginia, or math standards in California, or science standards in New Jersey, among other subjects in other states.

Guilty With Explanations

Three points are in order regarding how the Profile of Learning came to be.

First, Minnesotans take local control in education seriously. This emphasis has complicated the development and implementation of first-class academic standards as state officials, including legislators, have had to be careful not to suggest that they were calling too many of the shots. This is why defenders of the Profile (and there are quite a few of them) are quick to claim that communities will still have broad discretion in what they teach and how. Of course, this is not really true, as it's beyond the ability or preference, for example, of most of the state's nearly 350

school districts to develop nontraditional lesson plans and bundles of activities (the "performance packages") on their own. They surely will rely on the state for templates.

A second point is that officials like Governor Carlson have had to contend with no fewer than five distinct and often competing factions. One is made up of conservatives who favor rigorous statewide standards but find them utterly absent from the Profile. A second is also composed of conservatives, but this time the kind who don't believe the state has the ability (much less the right) to set standards in the first place. A third group is the business community, which has argued, in effect: What we really need are graduates and workers who can apply what they know, who can think their way through practical problems, who can work well with other people, etc.

Minnesotans take local control in education seriously.

Portions of the Minnesota business community, in other words, have fostered the anti-intellectual assumptions that mar the Profile. This is the case notwithstanding the fact that many Minnesota business leaders and groups have done brave and academically sound work in education over the last two decades. And also notwithstanding the fact that organizations like the Minnesota Business Partnership and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce did raise serious questions about the Profile before and during the '99 legislative session.[42]

In addition to these strains on the right (statewide standards, no statewide standards, and vocationally flavored standards), there are two competing camps on the left. According to Tim Sullivan of the Carlson administration, one is composed of cartel members who claim to favor standards but who, deep down, don't want yardsticks or accountability. The other is made up of legislative and other liberals who really *do* like standards—but not the academically grounded kind that conservatively inclined folks such as Bill Bennett, E. D. Hirsch, Diane Ravitch and others around the country tend to favor. In defense of Carlson and his predicament, Sullivan argues that it was "very hard to reconcile all of this," and asks, not illegitimately, what is a policymaker to do under such circumstances?

For the third and final point about the Profile of Learning and its history, recall Manno's comment that "Nowhere has there been a longer and more concerted effort to establish an outcome-based approach to student learning than in Minnesota." Which is to say, there may be a connection between the amount of time an idea lingers in the bowels of an education bureaucracy and the shape it comes to assume in final form. I say this because it's impossible to believe that the Profile of Learning would have turned into something so ornate and confusing if it had been forced to adhere to a faster schedule.

Time—relative eons of it—also stands out as a critical theme in understanding the development and eventual shape of rules regarding desegregation and, later, diversity in Minnesota schools. The proposed desegregation rule, for instance, that was promulgated by the State Board of Education for consideration by the 1994 Legislature, had been eight years in the making. A proposed rule regarding demographic diversity, killed by a very different State Board in 1998, had been a half-dozen years in the works. But another theme—about intellectual and organizational infrastructure—is salient, too.

Whereas choice in public schools came about because people like Joe Nathan and organizations like the Citizens League and the Minnesota Business Partnership had laid the necessary groundwork, both the proposed desegregation rule and the proposed diversity rule never went into effect because one scholar-activist in particular—supported by a public-policy organization alert to such issues—said whoa. That person was again Kathy Kersten.[43]

Her method in examining the desegregation and diversity rules, as with the Profile of Learning, was to dissect their component parts in order to spotlight the inevitability of their harmful consequences, intended or no. This, in turn, led to the energizing of many other players, in and out of political office, and the eventual demise of the rules in question. This process played itself out most elaborately with the proposed desegregation rule, to which we now turn.

"Good Intentions are Not Enough"

In early 1994, the State Board of Education was getting ready to adopt a new desegregation plan, mainly for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, that it would then present to the Legislature. Intended to replace a twenty-one-year-old rule, the updated scheme would break new ground not only by requiring, in effect, massive busing between the central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and their suburbs and exurbs, but also by requiring districts with more than thirty minority students to ensure that these youngsters performed at essentially the same levels as white students in the districts. Four measures were called for: academic performance, dropout rates, rates of suspension and expulsion, and rates of participation in remedial and honors classes. If a performance gap were to persist for more than four years, the state could "reconstitute" a school by changing all its teachers and its principal. If the gap continued for another three years, the state could take over the school.[44]

According to one story in the *Star Tribune*, the "push to bring the suburbs" into the process had come from the NAACP and other groups that maintained that "racial segregation in schools prevents equal educational opportunity and leads to segregation in the broader society." The article quoted Matthew Little, retired president of the Minneapolis NAACP, who warned that if the Legislature didn't approve the plan and adequately fund it, "that is going to set the grounds" for a lawsuit.

About the possibility of such legal action, a *Star Tribune* editorial was devoid of discernible doubt: If "results" were not forthcoming—if the Legislature, in other words, didn't approve and fund the plan—then the "courts will certainly intervene, and Minnesotans will rue the day legislators didn't pony up to close the education gap that so affects the future of the state."

This interpretation puzzled Kersten, a lawyer by training, who asked her husband, a practicing attorney, if it jibed with what he recalled about federal desegregation law from

their law school days. No, they both agreed, it didn't. As is her style, she immediately began to research the question, not only regarding the likelihood that adoption of the rule actually would increase the possibility of litigation and eventual court oversight of local schools, but also investigating what she took to be severe problems with the plan more generally. This led, in March of 1994, to her publishing an op-ed in the *Star Tribune* that fundamentally changed the course of all that followed.

Kersten wrote, for example, that supporters "claim that individual participation in the plan will be 'voluntary.' But can this be so in a meaningful sense when district racial quotas are mandatory and most families have indicated little interest in sending children out of their home districts?" In fact, in order to comply with the rule, Minneapolis would have to "exchange 12,000 students with its suburbs."

Kersten also asked: "What grounds are there to believe that [the proposed rule] will actually improve minority achievement? If a local school can't close the learning gap—which is often a function of factors beyond the school's control—how can state administrators working at a distance possibly hope to do so?"[47]

It would be an overstatement to suggest that Kersten's column broke the dam of politically correct quietude that had marked the issue, but it did cause a stir in not-inconsequential places like talk radio.[48] She followed up, a year later in March 1995, with a comprehensive 104-page study that provided further intellectual grist and intestinal fortitude for those whose instincts told them the Board of Education's plan was wrongheaded, but who needed help in declaring so in public. Here are a few of her main points.[49]

- Minnesota policymakers had long assumed that "racial balance in schools is the key to improving minority performance." But even though Minneapolis and St. Paul had been busing students for more that twenty years, "they have little to show for it but large tax bills." Minority test scores had not improved appreciably—and indeed, scores for black children had "declined sharply" in Minneapolis over the previous five years.
- Paradoxically, the plan would "greatly increase the chances of a successful suit against the State of Minnesota." This was true for two reasons. First, the Board of Education would create a "duty to desegregate" by radically altering the legal meaning of "segregation." And second, by requiring school districts to "reduce or close the learning gap to the Commissioner of Education's satisfaction," the plan would create "another enforceable legal obligation."
- The redefinition of "segregation," Kersten argued, as the intentional or *unintentional* separation of students of different races within a school or school district would render most Twin Cities-area districts "segregated" by the stroke of a pen. Similarly, the redefinition conceivably could be interpreted to require "proportional representation on sports teams, in physics classes, in bands and orchestras, and in extracurricular activities like language clubs." Far-fetched? Kersten noted that the Washington consultants used by the State Board in developing the plan had recommended that "segregated" schools give attention to racial representation on all these measures.
- Kersten concluded by suggesting several more promising ways of improving the academic performance of poor children, including giving greater weight to "neighborhood schools," which she said could "provide stability, contribute to a sense of community, and make it easier for parents to become involved in their children's education."

This last was not an incidental recommendation, as it was during this period that Sharon Sayles Belton, the African-American mayor of Minneapolis, came out in support of neighborhood schools even if it meant that

some of them would wind up with higher proportions of minority students than the state's extant desegregation rule allowed. A majority of members of the Minneapolis school board agreed with her a short time later.[50]

Sayles Belton's brave position, and that of the Minneapolis school board, no doubt came to have a bearing on the State Board, as did a House Republican Task Force on Student Achievement and Integration, which, in November 1995, rejected the main components of the Board's plan. "Overwhelmingly," said Representative Barb Sykora, co-chair of the panel, "parents want their children in schools in their neighborhoods." As for DFLers in the Legislature, one member of the Republican panel said few of them liked the proposed rule, either; they just weren't as vocal about it.

Overwhelmingly, parents want their children in schools in their neighborhoods.

By late 1995, nearly two years after Kersten started posing hard questions, the State Board was left with few audible advocates for what it had wanted to do. It proceeded unilaterally to drop the more intrusive and unrealistic aspects of its plan rather than wait for the 1996 Legislature to apply what likely would have been mortal blows.

But the Board may just have been keeping its powder dry. For two years later, it sought to adopt another rule—this time "relating to educational diversity"—in which assorted provisions of the desegregation rule seemed to rise from the regulatory dead.

It was Kersten time again.

"Any Measurable Disparity . . ."

Writing once more in the *Star Tribune*, in late 1997, Kersten alerted Minnesotans to some of the ramifications of the proposed "diversity" plan that would go into effect two weeks later if at least twenty-five citizens didn't contact the Department of Children, Families and Learning to request a hearing.[52]

Under the new rule, public schools would have an enforceable obligation to "reduce or eliminate" gaps in performance among demographic groups that Kersten described as "head-spinning" in their variety: racial and ethnic, male and female, poor and middle class, "abled" and disabled. What sorts of gaps would be forbidden? According to the "Statement of Need and Reasonableness" issued by the State Board of Education, the answer was "any measurable disparity in student performance, attendance rates, graduation rates, suspension rates, and rates of participation patterns in course offerings and extracurricular activities." Sound familiar?

According to the "Statement," as reported by Kersten, a key to success for "diverse students" is immersion in their own culture. So, for instance, American Indians need to be taught differently from other students since they value "cooperation and harmony" whereas white Americans value "profit, speed, and efficiency." But to "immerse Indian children in 'non-competitive' tribal culture," she pointed out, is to "render it highly unlikely" that they will develop an interest in things like chess or science fairs or math clubs, thus reinforcing rather than reducing gaps in these areas. Kersten, in other words, made clear not just the brutality of the plan's stereotyping but how it also contradicted and worked against itself.

The rest of this episode can be summed up speedily.

Opposition to the diversity rule burst open soon after Kersten's piece ran in the Minneapolis paper. The hearing that she said wouldn't be held unless twenty-five citizens asked for it went on for two days in November, with dozens of people speaking and more than 200 attending. "Hundreds more," Norman Draper of the *Star Tribune* reported, called, e-mailed or wrote CFL with

their opposition. Three weeks later, he wrote that, "Critics have run the gamut from the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, which have expressed concerns about what they see as redundant red tape required by the rule, to parents who are philosophically opposed to it." [54]

It took a day or two after Kersten's op-ed for the governor's office to recognize just how dreadful the rule was. But once Carlson and his people did, they mounted their own campaign, at the root of which was replacing two members of the Board whose terms happened to be ending. Radio talk show hosts again made an important contribution by ridiculing the rule's faults. And the Minnesota Family Council did an excellent job of informing parents of what was going on and encouraging them to attend and testify at the hearing. In January 1998, the diversity rule was defeated on a vote of 5-3 by the State Board itself.

> According to the statement, a key to success for "diverse students" is immersion in their own culture.

What of legislators? Evidently they were less than impressed by the Board's inability to deliver a decent diversity rule or a decent desegregation rule. Unimpressed enough that, when a bill was introduced in 1998 by Gen Olson, a Republican in the overwhelmingly Democratic Senate, to terminate Minnesota's State Board of Education by the end of 1999, it sailed through and became law with barely a whitecap of commotion.[55]

Conclusion

Let me first recap the paper's more important findings, then speculate on the future of school choice during the Ventura administration.

Findings and Themes

- I recall a meeting during the 1997 legislative session when, in a discussion about Governor Carlson's tax credit and deduction plan, a major Republican figure reported on his recent conversation with a senior Democratic legislator. The latter—even though he very much opposed what Carlson wanted to do, and even though Democrats held an overwhelming majority in the Senate—conceded that governors "usually get what they want." The message, not necessarily intended, was clear: If Arne stood tough, he almost surely would win, even if not all that he sought.

  That exchange embodies this study's core conclusion: No institution or individual is more important in the making or breaking of state education policy than governors. More precisely, no one is more important than governors who are *engaged.*

- Just as governors and gubernatorial oversight are vital, the paper has argued that so are quantities of time and sunlight. The more time an idea or initiative is allowed to linger in the educational catacombs the more likely it will emerge as a caricature. Note, too, that the push for school choice under both Perpich and Carlson came predominantly from outside the education establishment, while the desegregation and diversity rules, plus the Profile of Learning, were overwhelmingly the work of insiders.

- I have argued that Minnesota has benefited from what may be an unusually rich array of civic organizations and public intellectuals, skillful in advancing policies they like and retarding those they don't. This critical mass of talent and energy, not incidentally, is concentrated in the Twin Cities, which not only is the population center of the

state, but also home to the state capital. It may well be easier for activists to solicit and pound policymakers in Minnesota than in states with more remote capitals like Albany, Sacramento and Springfield.

- The paper has also talked about how Minnesotans (pale ones, anyway) tend to squirm in their seats at the mere mention of race, with such reticence leading to Byzantine desegregation and diversity plans; plans that eventually were blocked only when someone from outside government and the cartel spoke up.
- We have seen, paradoxically, how Minnesota's strong faith in governmental activism may have been one of the reasons that Carlson's school-choice plan—which increased tax breaks for *private* school expenses—passed.
- We have discovered, furthermore, that Republicans and Democrats, conservative and liberals, have all moved the reform ball forward, if not always in the same ways.
- And I have contended that teacher unions in Minnesota—never mind the fear they have been known to instill in politicians—can be anything but potent, as they unsuccessfully opposed every single victory spotlighted in these pages.

Wrestling with the Future

Shortly before taking office in January 1999, Jesse Ventura, in a speech to the Minnesota School Boards Association, was quoted as saying: "The ultimate report card on how you're doing is whether the word 'voucher' disappears from our vocabulary. I'm here to tell you that it isn't in my vocabulary."[56]

As disappointing as this sounded to choice advocates, I've been told by at least two people close to the action that what Ventura was really saying was: "Look, I'm not any fonder of vouchers [read: universal school choice] than you are. But I'm here to tell you that unless you make good use of all the extra money I'm going to help you get for smaller class sizes and the like—unless kids really do learn more and perform better on tests because of those extra bucks—then all bets are off. Unless I see real improvements, I just might be willing to entertain a thought or two about expanding school choice."

I'm afraid that the sizable increase in state funding for K-12 education that Ventura did win during the 1999 legislative session will not result in the kind of academic improvements he hopes for. The weight of decades of empirical research about the effects of money and class size is just not on his side, and I believe chances are decent that he will come to recognize the futility of his course before he completes his term in January 2003.

Very much related will be another disappointment expected in the spring of 2000. That's when large numbers of teenagers, disproportionately poor and minority, will fail to graduate from high school because of their inability to pass simple "basic skills" tests in reading and math.[57] This will happen as research continues to emerge around the country confirming that low-income boys and girls tend to do better in private and parochial schools than in inner-city public schools.

It will be at one of these points over the next few years, I say with all regard, that Governor Ventura—just like every Minnesota governor since Democrat Wendell Anderson in the early 1970s—may well come to appreciate the power of school choice. The fact that he professes uncommon reverence for freedom and respect for competition is additional cause for optimism. Or so I would like to think.

Notes

[1] My thanks to the many key players with whom I spoke in writing this paper as well as to the following individuals who reviewed an earlier draft: Jim Bartholomew, Bill Blazar, Morgan Brown, Ed Cook, Susan Heegard, Ember Reichgott Junge, Katherine Kersten, Ted Kolderie, Joe Nathan, Annette Meeks, Peter Nelson, Gen Olson, Rudy Perpich, Jr., Al Quie, Kristin Robbins, and Tom Triplett. I'm particularly grateful to Hannah Brummer, an American Experiment intern from the University of Minnesota, for her tenacious and quick bibliographic research and retrieval. Any mistakes, of course, are mine alone.

[2] Actually, this was the second time Minnesota seems to have gone first in passing a statewide income-tax credit for K-12 expenses. In 1971, the state enacted a credit for educational expenses, but it applied only to families whose children attended nonpublic schools. The Minnesota Supreme Court invalidated that law in 1974 based primarily on the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in the Nyquist case in which the high court ruled against a New York tax-deduction program precisely because it was available only to private school families. The 1997 Minnesota law championed by Gov. Arne Carlson took this critical point into account by assuring that the tax credit (as well as the expansion of an existing tax deduction) applied to both private and public school expenses. Tanja L. Kozicky, in a memo to Gov. Arne Carlson, "Overview of Tax Credit and Deduction Case Law," 3 June 1997.

[3] The "Department of Children, Families and Learning," several years ago, came to be Minnesota's very own name for its Department of Education.

[4] At home, Minnesota Democrats are known as DFLers, which stands for "Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party."

[5] Based on a telephone poll of 850 Minnesotans conducted in January 1994 by Gordon S. Black Corporation of Rochester, NY. Margin of error was 3.4 percent. These school-choice choice results perfectly foreshadowed remarkably strong popular support in 1997 for Gov. Arne Carlson's tax credit and deduction plan as measured in four separate surveys. See the section titled "Educational Freedom and Choice."

[6] This last point was made by Ted Kolderie, in a personal interview, 9 July 1999. Kolderie himself has been credited by many with being the master synthesizer of the charter school concept. See, for example, Bryan C. Hassel, *The Charter School Challenge: Avoiding the Pitfalls, Fulfilling the Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999), p. 5. Kolderie is a St. Paul-based public intellectual and activist who continues to play a major role in Minnesota reform efforts. More about him shortly.

[7] I'm particularly indebted to Kolderie, Chuck Slocum, and Tom Triplett for this next portion of the analysis.

[8] Gregor W. Pinney, a long-time education reporter, wrote in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* at the time: "The 'excellence' movement in U.S. education has been going on for a year, but it hasn't had a sizable impact on the way people are educated in Minnesota's schools and colleges. . . . [S]o far, Minnesota has not latched onto the movement's major ideas: merit pay and higher pay for teachers, tougher high school graduation requirements, a longer school year, higher college admission requirements, more homework, and competence tests for promotion or graduation." Pinney quoted former Minnesota Gov. Al Quie, who had been a member of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the panel that produced "A Nation at Risk," as saying, "What it means, I think, is that Minnesota is going to rest on its laurels as being better than other states."

[9] Founded in 1952, the nonpartisan Citizens League describes itself as an "active and effective public affairs and education organization." It also claims that its "impact shows up in public finance, regional government, education, transportation and health care." All true. It's a very good and well-respected Twin Cities institution.

[10] Kolderie would view it as a shortcoming not to acknowledge one behind-the-scenes player in particular in the development of public school choice: Dan Loritz, the then-lobbyist for the Minnesota Department of Education whose background and views were similar to Perpich's.

[11] The Minnesota Business Partnership, formed in 1977, is composed of the CEOs of the 100-plus largest businesses in the state.

[12] "Educating Students for the 21st Century," BW Associates, commissioned by the Minnesota Business Partnership, Minneapolis, MN, 12 November 1984.

[13] Rudy Perpich, who had been lieutenant governor, became governor when then-Governor Wendell Anderson arranged his own appointment to the U.S. Senate, thus succeeding Walter Mondale when the latter was elected vice-president in

1976. Perpich was then defeated by Republican Al Quie in 1978, but regained the office by beating Republican Wheelock Whitney in 1982. He was defeated by Republican Arne Carlson in 1990. Overall, Perpich served as governor of Minnesota longer than anyone else.

[14] Joe Nathan, *Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983).

[15] Ellen Foley, Mary Jane Smetanka, and Lori Sturdevant, "Perpich school plan meets with caution, rejection, confusion," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, 5 January 1985.

[16] Many observers give great credit for passage of the postsecondary options program to Connie Levi, a Republican and the newly elected House majority leader, who was more enthusiastic about what Perpich was trying to do than were many Democrats. Postsecondary options wound up getting passed first, at least in part, because of the greater attention and consternation directed at the open-enrollment provision.

[17] The High School Graduation Incentives program was originally described by the *Star Tribune* as a "second-chance" option for dropouts and near-dropouts to choose among public school programs they thought would serve them best. The program was expanded in 1991 so that districts could contract with "nonpublic" and "nonprofit" schools, including parochial schools. I've heard more than one person cite the important, if still-underappreciated importance of this latter breakthrough.

[18] By 1 March 1987, for example, reporter Lucy Dalglish of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* could write: "Two years ago, Minnesota Gov. Rudy Perpich championed a bold program to induce more competition between school districts and offer more choices for students who wanted to improve their academic programs. . . . While supported by some business and community groups, the reforms faced stiff opposition from the most influential education groups. Most of the plans were defeated by the Legislature. . . . Perpich will be back this week with his plans for 1987, but things will be different. 'I don't see anything that controversial in there,' Sen. James Pehler, DFL-St. Cloud, said of Perpich's bill.'". Editorial page support for Perpich's plan in the state's two largest newspapers, the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* was strong right from the start. A *Pioneer Press* editorial on 9 January 1985, for example, opened: "Gov. Rudy Perpich has made a bold and visionary proposal that would energize public education in Minnesota." Neither paper has yet to show similar enthusiasm for choice programs involving private schools.

[19] The open-enrollment bill that passed in 1987 reflected this half-way posture. The bill that passed in 1988 required districts to allow students to leave if they so chose. It also gave districts the right to close their borders only if they had no space for transfers from other districts.

[20] Rudy Perpich, Jr., the governor's son, has confirmed this account. I've been told that former Rep. Connie Levi was inspired to support postsecondary options by a not dissimilar event in her own family.

[21] As cited in Joe Nathan, *Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), p. 62.

[22] As described by Nathan in *Charter Schools*, p. 65. Junge more recently has written: "We never had any teacher support for charter schools from either the MFT or MEA. The MFT leadership later said that what Shanker was referring to was totally different from what I was proposing. He apparently [according to MFT officials] meant 'in-district' charter schools, which we would now equate with a magnet school. When the charter school bill got to the Senate and House floors, both unions sent out very hostile materials criticizing charter schools, particularly in 1991, the year of passage." Personal correspondence, 10 August 1999. Nathan has described Shanker's conception of charters in similar terms.

[23] Nathan, p. 70. Another legislator deserving large credit for charter schools was Becky Kelso, a Democrat from the Twin Cities exurb of Shakopee. A half-dozen years later, in 1997, although she opposed the kind of school choice advocated by Arne Carlson, she played a significant role then, too, in helping broker the concluding deal between Democrats and Republicans.

[24] *Take Your Victories as They Come*, ed. Mary Lahr Schier (Minneapolis: MSP Books, 1998).

[25] It's important to note that a Democratic state legislator, John Brandl of Minneapolis, introduced legislation even before Rudy Perpich started pushing for public school choice that would have granted vouchers for low-income students to attend private and parochial schools. It failed, of course, but Brandl's efforts—in addition to being terrifically brave—were useful in framing the issue as anything but elitist in spirit. Brandl, an economist, is now dean of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He is also co-vice chairman of Minnesotans for School Choice.

[26] The districts were to be Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with a to-be-named Twin Cities suburban district, as well as a district in Greater Minnesota.

[27] Robbins also was hired to serve as executive director of MSC's nonpolitical, tax-exempt counterpart, what is now known as the Partnership for Choice in Education.

[28] Republicans held sixty-four seats in the Minnesota House in the spring of 1997. DFLers held seventy. Carlson needed forty-five votes to sustain a veto.

[29] Legislators reached this compromise in a one-day special session on 26 June 1997: Families with household incomes of less than $33,500 annually could now take advantage of a tax credit of upwards of $1,000 per child, with a $2,000 limit per family. This applied to educational expenses for things such as tutoring, transportation, tuition for summer camps, computer hardware and software, textbooks, and other instructional materials. All families—but most pertinently, those with household incomes of more than $33,500 annually—were eligible for a substantial increase in the size of the state's longtime program of tax deductions for educational expenses. More specifically, the deduction was increased to reach as high as $1,625 for families in grades K-6, and up to $2,500 for families with children in grades 7-12. The deduction covered the same expenses covered by the credit, with the notable addition of private and religious school tuition.

[30] Additional details can be found in a memo I wrote to all 201 members of the Minnesota Legislature dated 23 June 1997. Recall the equally impressive school-choice results of the statewide survey conducted by Center of the American Experiment in 1994.

[31] Schier, pp. 147-66.

[32] Tim Mazzoni, Carol Freeman, and Dan Stewart (with the assistance of Eric Campbell), "State Policymaking and Outcome-Based Education: A Minnesota Case Study," Department of Educational Policy and Administration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, December 1992, p. 2.

[33] Mary Jane Smetanka, "State's school standards weak, union says: Education officials say report unfairly characterizes Minnesota," *Star Tribune,* 30 July 1977. Smetanka wrote: "The report, the third annual survey released by the 900,000-member teachers union, says that while about one-third of the states have strong standards in English, math, sciences and social studies and most states excel in at least three of those four areas, Minnesota has clear and specific standards in none of them. Only six other states did as badly as Minnesota, an unusual finish for a state that usually finishes at the top of national education surveys." Diane Ravitch, when asked in 1997 by CFL to evaluate the Profile's social studies standards, wrote: "I will be candid because I don't have the time to be diplomatic. In the area of social studies, the Minnesota standards are among the worst in the nation. They are vague. . . . They are not testable. . . . I advise you to toss them out and start over." Letter to Kate Trewick, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, 30 October 1997.

[34] Bruno Manno, "Outcome-Based Education: Has It Become More Affliction Than Cure?" Center of the American Experiment, Minneapolis, MN, August 1994, p. 22. In calling the debate "muddled," Manno actually was agreeing with Arne Carlson, who was quoted in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on 12 December 1993 as saying this about one of the seemingly countless official drafts on the subject: "We are turning the corner from the abstract to the semi-abstract [but] . . . it's still not understandable at the local barbershop. . . . This is a healthy debate. But right now it's a muddled debate, it really is."

[35] Mazzoni et al., appendix.

[36] Norman Draper, "Changing the lesson plan: With the state's new learning-by-doing graduation requirements slated to begin later this year, educators are expressing both hopes and fears," *Star Tribune,* 8 February 1998.

[37] Katherine A. Kersten, *Minnesota's Profile of Learning: The Radical Mutation of a Good Idea,* Center of the American Experiment, Minneapolis, MN, February 1999. The title of Kersten's study reflects her view that while the Profile had turned into a disaster, the "idea behind standards-based reform was good." Or, as she writes early on: "For too long, Minnesota schools had been judged, not on their results—what students actually learned—but on inputs like funding and teacher credentials. The standards movement advocated something new—attention to outcomes or results."

[38] Rob Hotakainen, "A multiple-choice review of education: Profile of Learning takes center stage of gubernatorial debate on education," *Star Tribune,* 12 October 1998.

[39] While much of this opposition, of course, was from conservative quarters, not all of it was. The St. Paul Federation of Teachers, for instance, reported that the Profile and its "performance packages" have become synonymous for teachers with "exasperation, frustration, and exhaustion."

[40] Ventura's position seemed to be even milder than that of the Senate. According to administration officials, the Profile needed only to be tweaked, not reworked in any serious way.

[41] Kersten, in *Profile of Learning*, p. 3.

[42] Norman Draper, "Task force suggests major makeover for Profile of Learning," *Star Tribune*, 11 December 1998. Draper wrote that the panel—which included educators and state officials in addition to business leaders—called for an overhaul of the Profile that "could sidetrack Minnesota's massive effort to revamp the way public-school students are taught."

[43] In addition to being a member of American Experiment's board of directors, Kersten is the Center's senior fellow for cultural studies. She also served as chairman of the organization from January 1996 to January 1998.

[44] Nancy Livingston, "Integration plan requires suburban aid: proposal envisions student transfers," *St. Paul Pioneer Press* 12 January 1994. The proposed rule was informed by a dozen Desegregation Roundtable meetings, attended by education officials and community leaders, and chaired by a Honeywell executive. The plan defined a "segregated district" as one with more than 31 percent, or less than 10 percent, minority students. While districts would be required to do certain things, all would remain "voluntary" on the part of parents and students. The plan, it should be noted, also emphasized magnet schools.

[45] Laurie Blake, "Metro desegregation: an uphill battle," *Star Tribune*, 16 January 1994.

[46] 5 February 1994.

[47] Katherine Kersten, "Metrowide school busing plan neither inevitable nor desirable," *Star Tribune*, 16 March 1994.

[48] "People who are aware of the plan's shortcomings," Kersten correctly wrote in her op-ed, "have remained silent for fear of being labeled 'racist,' or appearing unconcerned about minority children's academic success."

[49] Katherine A. Kersten, *Good Intentions Are Not Enough: The Peril Posed by Minnesota's New Desegregation Plan*, Center of the American Experiment, Minneapolis, MN, March 1995. By the time this study was released, SBE had toned down some its earlier proposed mandates. For example, the new version of its plan spoke of metro-area districts achieving inter-district desegregation to the "greatest extent possible."

[50] Thomas J. Collins, "Minneapolis will cut back on busing: schools to stress achievement, keeping students close to home," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 28 June 1995. City schools did, in fact, win a two-year waiver in March 1996 from the state's then-existing desegregation rule. Wayne Washington, "Minneapolis gets approval for community schools plan," *Star Tribune*, 13 March 1996.

[51] The most out-front advocate for assertively seeking racial balance was the Minneapolis NAACP, whose lawyer, Daniel Shulman, framed the issue this way: "What we are looking at is not so much desegregation as adequacy or inadequacy. Percentage is important. But it's not a numbers game. The goal is adequacy of education. One of the major problems is that schools are overwhelmed by a concentration of children who have so far to go, who come from such difficult circumstances. Where those children are put together in one place, the children don't have a chance; the schools don't have a chance." Debra O'Connor, "State ponders how to define segregation," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 10 October 1995.

[52] "State school board's dubious Diversity Rules: Unless citizens object soon, there won't be a public hearing," 15 October 1997. By this time, Kersten was writing a biweekly column for the *Star Tribune*.

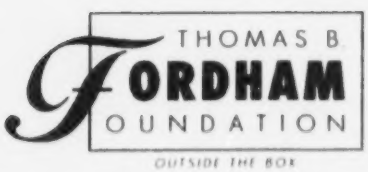
[53] "Carlson vows to try to kill diversity rule if board won't," 19 November, 1997.

[54] "Board of Education opens diversity rule to revisions; Broad criticism spurs group to reconsider proposal," 9 December 1997.

[55] Senator Olson, the Senate's leading Republican in matters of education, as well as a member of Center of the American Experiment's board of directors, has been involved in every issue discussed in this paper, always in sound ways. I should add that, as I write, Kersten is striking again, this time challenging an off-the-wall diversity plan for day-care workers. "State program aims to inject cultural correctness into day care," *Star Tribune*, 8 September 1999.

[56] Anthony Lonetree, "Ventura seeks to clarify his education agenda: Commitment to public schools stressed," *Star Tribune*, 16 January 1999. Vouchers—as opposed to tax credits—are currently a dead issue in Minnesota because of opposition, not just from liberals, but also from many religious conservatives who fear government intrusions.

[57] As of September 1999, almost 6,000 high school seniors in the state had still not passed basic skills tests in reading and math. Linda Owen and John Welsh, "5,700 seniors face skills tests—again," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 17 September 1999, p. 1A.



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